

REMARKS

Claims 1-3 and 6-11 are now pending in this application for which applicants seek reconsideration.

Amendment

Claims 4 and 5 have been canceled, claims 1-3 have been amended to improve their form, readability, and clarity, and new claims 6-11 have been added. Independent claims 1 and 2 have been amended to incorporate the subject matter of claims 4 and 5, respectively. Moreover, claim 1 has been amended to include a sound pickup device, e.g., a microphone. New claims 6 and 7 further define the array speaker configuration, while new claims 8-11 further define the particulars of the embodiment set forth in Fig. 9. No new matter has been introduced.

Art Rejection

Claims 1-4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Akio (USP 6,111,962) in view of Yoshino (USP 7,054,448). Applicants traverse this rejection because the combination would not have disclosed or taught an audio characteristic correction system for an array speaker as set forth in independent claims 1 and 2.

Independent claims 1 and 2 each call for an audio characteristic correction system for correcting for audio characteristics of the wall surface or the sound reflection board. The claims call for correcting audio characteristics of sound reflected by not just any speaker, but an array speaker that creates virtual surround sound. See new claims 6 and 7, which specifically defines the array speaker. The array speaker thus is a virtual surround-sound speaker.

In rejecting claim 4, the examiner states that Akio's Figs. 3-5 disclose an array speaker. Applicants disagree. Both Akio and Yoshino disclose using a plurality of directional speakers. But their directional speakers cannot form an array speaker. See Fig. 4 and pages 12-13 of the specification. An array speaker is not the same as a plurality of speakers lined up side by side. Moreover, one of ordinary skill in the art would have known that speakers lined up side by side cannot produce surround sound. Rather, they need to be placed spaced apart at different locations of the room, as illustrated in Akio's Figs. 4-5 and Yoshino's Fig. 6. Indeed, lining up Akio's or Yoshino's speakers to in an array configuration would not create a virtual surround-sound speaker. An array speaker vastly differs from Akio's directional speakers in terms of usage and technology. Accordingly, applicants submit that the combination would not have taught the claimed invention.

New claims 8-11 call for a characteristic correction control device (or means) that changes the directivity of the array speaker while the sound pickup device is picking up sound so that the sound pickup device picks up sound reflected off of different areas of the wall surface or the sound reflection board. Applicants submit that Akio and Yoshino also would have disclosed or taught this aspect of the invention.

Conclusion

Applicants submit that the pending claims patentably distinguish over the applied references and are in condition for allowance. Should the examiner have any issues concerning this reply or any other outstanding issues remaining in this application, applicants urge the examiner to contact the undersigned to expedite prosecution.

Respectfully submitted,

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02 JANUARY 2008

DATE

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